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## **Sen. Brown's legislation passes Senate for Round Two** *Bills give boost to environment and agriculture*

**LANSING** – Legislation vetoed last year by Gov. Jennifer Granholm designed to aid both farmers and the environment was passed by the Senate today, announced Sen. Cameron S. Brown, R-Fawn River Township, sponsor of the legislation.

If signed into law, Senate Bills 251 and 538 would create new incentives for farmers and agricultural processors to utilize environmentally friendly alternative energy systems, such as methane digesters, which neutralize harmful pathogens and eliminate odors.

“This legislation is a win-win for all involved,” Brown said. “Not only will the bills help Michigan’s second leading industry – agriculture – but they will also help protect the state’s environment and natural resources.”

SB 251 is designed to establish a property tax exemption for methane digester, biomass gasification and thermal depolymerization systems, once they are operational.

SB 538 would ensure that eligible farmers could obtain low-interest loans through the Small Business Pollution Prevention Loan Program to build qualified agricultural energy production systems.

Methane digesters, one of the most common types of agricultural energy production systems, process agricultural byproducts using treatment technology that yields methane gas, and at the same time reduces harmful pathogens and disturbing odors. Animal waste, excess crops and vegetation can be used in the systems. The energy produced can then be used to generate electricity for the business.

“These technologies are extremely effective but also extremely expensive,” Brown said. “These bills will help farmers afford systems that will produce energy while at the same time reducing waste and pollution.”

To ensure that environmental polluters will not benefit from the incentives, applicants cannot be criminal violators or civil violators who have paid \$10,000 or more in civil fines under the Natural Resources and Environmental Protection Act within a three-year period. The incentives

also are restricted to farms that are verified by the Michigan Department of Agriculture under the Michigan Agriculture Environmental Assurance Program.

In a letter delivered after Senate passage, Brown urged the governor to reconsider her position on the bills.

“The governor has expressed interest in renewable energy and energy efficiency,” Brown said. “This legislation is an opportunity for her to act in support of Michigan agriculture, natural resources and alternative energy.”

SBs 251 and 538 now head to the House of Representatives for consideration.

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